



Colorado Workers Need Paid Sick Days Especially During an H1N1 Flu Outbreak

Researchers predict that 30 – 50 percent of us may get the H1N1 flu this season.¹ Government officials are urging us to stay home from work if we have symptoms, and to keep sick children home from school. But this isn't an option for nearly 1 million Colorado workers. They may want to do the right thing and prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus. Yet, without job-protected paid sick days, these workers will risk their paychecks and even their jobs if they stay home when they or their children contract the flu.

It's past time that our elected leaders adopt a minimum standard of paid sick days so working people can earn time off to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus—without jeopardizing their economic security. **Paid sick days legislation in Colorado would guarantee workers up to nine paid sick days a year to recover from illness, care for a sick family member or attend medical appointments. We urge Colorado Legislators to support this basic workplace standard.**

Working people need time off from work to recover from the H1N1 flu and care for sick family members—and prevent further spread of the virus.

- Nearly half of all workers lack paid sick days (43% specifically in CO), including 79% of low-wage workers, 78% of food-service workers and 79% of child-care workers. If these workers stay home from work when ill, they risk adverse financial consequences.

Government officials are asking workers to stay home to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus. This is excellent advice, as far as it goes, but workers need paid sick days to protect their paychecks and their jobs, especially in these tough economic times.

- Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said that "if an employee stays home sick, it's not only the best thing for that employee's health, but also his co-workers and the productivity of the company."²
- HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said that "one of the most important things that employers can do is to make sure their human resources and leave policies are flexible and follow public health guidance."³
- The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) has also issued recommendations: "People with influenza-like illness [must] remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever...without the use of fever-reducing medications."⁴ Schools will need to rely on parents to keep children at home if they are feverish.⁵

The H1N1 flu virus is once again spreading. We need urgent action from the Administration and Congress to ensure that working families don't risk their financial security to do what is right for their own health and the public health of their workplaces, schools and communities.

- Already the CDC has recorded more than 8,800 hospitalizations and 550 deaths related to H1N1 flu.⁶ The virus is so widespread that the CDC and World Health Organization are no longer keeping track of the number of individual cases. But officials estimate the virus will cause 30,000 – 90,000 deaths in the U.S., mainly among children and young adults, this fall and winter.⁷

¹ Wall Street Journal, 9/1/09, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125181906450676403.html>

² Associated Press, "Government enlists employers' help to contain flu,"

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_SWINE_FLU_GUIDELINES?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2009-08-19-12-23-38

³ HHS News Release, 8/19/09, www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/08/20090819a.html

⁴ CDC, www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/exclusion.htm

⁵ Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy, Univ. of Minn., www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/influenza/swineflu/news/aug0709schools3.html

⁶ CDC, Novel H1N1 Flu Situation Update, 9/2/09, www.cdc.gov/H1n1flu/update.htm

⁷ Wall Street Journal, 9/1/09, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125181906450676403.html>

This factsheet is a modified version of the original created by the National Partnership for Women and Families.

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